

Act to Preserve Palsades**22 Vow Building Curb
In Merrywood Area**

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By William Chapman

Staff Reporter

A citizens' campaign to preserve the Potomac Palsades bore fruit yesterday as 22 owners of property near the Merrywood estate in Virginia pledged to limit strictly the use of their land.

They handed the Federal Government deeds for scenic easements on 60 acres overlooking the Potomac and said they will seek voluntary commitments to tie down other properties.

Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall is one of those agreeing to restrict his land to low-density development.

The easements, designed primarily to keep out apartments, would limit development to farms or single-family homes no higher than 40 feet. No lots smaller than an acre could be sold and no trees cut down without National Park Service approval.

The restrictions would not become effective unless the Government, by Sept. 1, 1966, has acquired similar protection over at least 90 per cent of the entire 261-acre section on the wooded Potomac Bluffs.

The area, which includes land in both Fairfax and Arlington Counties, lies between the Potomac and the George Washington Memorial Parkway, its southern boundary being the approaches to Chain Bridge.

Mrs. John A. Bross of 4501 Crest la., McLean, headed the citizens' committee that gave the deeds yesterday to Mrs. James H. Rowe Jr., chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission.

Mrs. Bross said the committee will continue urging neighbors to grant similar easements. About a half-dozen land-owners so far have refused.

To make the deeds good, the citizens or the Government must get scenic easements or outright title to the remaining 200 acres, specifically including the controversial 47-acre Merrywood estate and a seven-acre property owned by Dr. Roger Baker.

Interior has filed suit for scenic easements on Merrywood, thereby blocking a planned apartment development, and negotiations on a price are underway. The Baker tract was specifically mentioned because the owner has advertised it for sale as suitable for apartments.

The 60 acres pledged yesterday plus the Merrywood easement would bring about 41 per cent of the land area under the protective deeds.

Mrs. Rowe congratulated the Palsades citizens on their "foresightedness and generosity." One of the landowners, Robert J. McKinsey, 3901 N. 44th st., explained that donors considered preservation of the Palsades a "civic duty."

Among the 22 who have signed up are American Broadcasting Co. commentator Edward P. Morgan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Walter T. Skallerup, and Walter T. Ridder of Ridder Publications.